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THE PULPIT AND HUMAN LIFE;

OR,

*THE MINISTER AS THE INTERPRETER AND
SPIRITUAL LEADER OF HUMAN LIFE.*

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AN ADDRESS

*Delivered to the Students of the Lancashire Independent
College, Manchester, at the Forty-Seventh Sessional
Anniversary, June 19th, 1890.*

BY

JOHN CLIFFORD, M.A., D.D.

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THE PULPIT AND HUMAN LIFE.

I. WHEN the Protestant Knights of Germany offered Martin Luther the aid of their stout swords in defence of the imperilled cause of the Reformation, the wise leader, sore as was the need of help, promptly refused the service of such suspicious weapons, and said, with a confidence born of experience, "THE WORD WILL DO IT." He knew the keen edge of the "sword of the Spirit which is the word of God"; and could cheerfully trust it in any encounter he might have to face. He had tested that Word himself, in the tough conflicts and spiritual agonies of Erfurth and Rome and the Wartburg, and as he saw the bright blade unbroken and unbent, he met his foes unabashed and unfearing.

To-day we raise the same symbol and express the same confidence, as we celebrate another anniversary of this Institution for the training of Preachers of the everlasting Gospel. "*The Word will do it.*" We share our fathers' convictions and hopes, assured that "the Preaching of the Word" is the divinely appointed ministry for the saving of men, for the healing, guidance, and progress of the ages; for this age as for that behind us; and for the coming age as for our own.

Speaking to you, my brothers, as Candidates for the service of the Churches and of the nation, through this ministry of Divine Truth, I greet you, as God's elect men; men of high ideals and of many salutary fears, of glowing consecration to Christ and self-suppressing love of souls; of trust in the living God, and of tested abilities; and in greeting you upon the work which awaits you, I rejoice that your chief tool and supreme instrument in serving your generation,—the Revelation of God in the Two Testaments,—offers such solid, historical and indefeasible guarantees for victorious confidence. "The Word HAS done it." Luther's faith has been vindicated

by illuminated and regenerated Europe. His recovery of the Scriptures from the tomb in which the Papacy had buried them, and his restoration of them to their true place in the life of men, have been the spiritual resurrection of the nations. The tree is known by its fruits. The uses of the Bible have been, and are, its defence ; and to increase the area of those uses till they cover and fill the whole life of man, meanwhile heightening and purifying the quality of the uses till they reach the perfection of the Divine, is the chief task of the Christian Church—a task the responsibility of which presses with increasing weight on the appointed and trained ministers of the Word, the spiritual leaders of our human life.

II. Seeing, then, it is your vocation to increase the services of this Book to mankind, I choose to speak to you to-day on "The Pulpit and Human Life ; or, the Minister as the Interpreter and Spiritual Leader of Human Life" ; therefore on what I may, in some sense, call another Bible—the Bible of our present, manifold, complex, mysterious, and awe-inspiring Life. Another Bible—and yet not another ; for it is so closely related to "the law which came by Moses," and to "the grace that came," and still comes, "by Jesus Christ," that, read with the eyes of the seer, it is not so much another Scripture as a continuation of the former and older. It is written by the same Author, shot through and through with the same redeeming purpose, swayed by the same ideas, darkened by similar difficulties, and strong in the same inspired and inspiring forces ; and therefore it is not too much to believe that if we were sufficiently receptive of the Holy Ghost, the true record of our day would be a series of additions to the story of the manifestations of the self-activity of the living God contained in the Old and New Testaments. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; and the stuff and substance, the need and purpose, of our life do not change.

" For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear,
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been, indeed, and is."

That is, in brief, of learning to know God, and becoming like Him in character, service, and blessedness. For to make the best and most of the revelation which came by the prophets and psalmists, we must *use* it in the actual life of to-day, apply

its principles to the solution of our individual and social problems, its exceeding great and precious promises for the solace of sorrowing hearts, and demonstrate that it is, as of old, "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

This, then, is the preacher's high calling—to make men and women and children see what this unspeakable gift of life is; what makes it poor and mean and base, a long misery, a conscious death; what redeems it and fills it with beauty and nobleness and good; to inspire the heart with faith in its intrinsic value, with courage to face its temptations, to battle for righteousness and truth, and with patience to hold on in spite of defeat and disaster. The call to the ministry of the Word involves and embraces the responsible task of interpreting the many-paged Bible of our human life, and necessitates the discharge of the functions of a spiritual leader in that life.

III. A theme more opportune I do not know; a duty more urgent and pressing does not exist. Never was life worth so much as now. Never had it more or better to give. Never was it so opulent in the opportunity that allures stalwart souls, the responsibility that educates, the difficulty that goads, or the promise that sustains and inspires. The last half-century has witnessed a multiplication of the values of human living not paralleled by any previous fifty years in the history of the race and only distantly approached by the memorable half century of the Lutheran Reformation, and the still more distinctive era beginning with the Birth of Christianity. Under the restricted and hard conditions and severe limitations of life in Palestine, Jesus Christ asked: "What shall a man give in exchange for his *life*?" Then it was a peerless treasure, a pearl of great price; but eighteen centuries of Divine training have increased the values of living for us, a thousandfold; in the quickening store of personal forces, the available riches of experience, and the heritage of ideas. Life was never worth so much as now, and here, and the interest of men in it was never larger, deeper, or more keen. In fact, many men treat it as the Supreme Reality; the one possession about which they are sure, at least for a brief space; the one subject of which they know something, if not much, the one interest that is undeniably, although mysteriously practical. The Scriptures they may

neglect ; but the duties of labour are exigent. The lessons learnt at school may be forgotten ; but the sorrow that rends the heart, the sin that so easily besets and ensnares, and the shadowing of the dark tragedy of death—these they cannot away with. George Eliot, talking with F. W. H. Myers concerning *God, Immortality, and Duty*, pronounced with terrible earnestness, how inconceivable was the *first*, how unbelievable was the *second*, but was obliged to add “how peremptory and absolute was the *third*.”

But though the present life has acquired great values and become the all-commanding reality, yet the need for authentic interpretation and spiritual leadership is more acutely felt than ever. Here, in the heart of our Western civilisation, where the sources of wisdom and culture, of literature and power flow most copiously, the mystery of existence is felt most oppressively, and the tantalising questions which its greatness and littleness, wealth and poverty provoke, sum themselves in the oft-heard inquiry, “Is it, after all, worth while to live?” “What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue.” The fuller the life, the heavier the weight. The more the man, the more the burden. It is not the dwellers in the sunny South, basking beneath the plantain-tree and waiting for the fall of its ripe fruit, who petulantly ask : “Is life worth living?” They do not feel the greatness of existence. They ask no questions. It is the men of our large and growing cities, with their innumerable facilities for pleasure, their cry for social readjustment, and their increasing capacity for service and for enjoyment, who stand awe-struck before the mystery of being and ask for light on the problems of life. The Greek does not feel the gravity of existence. He lives. He enjoys. Beauty swims in upon his soul ; his spirit is glad and serene. He carries little or no care. It is the Hebrew, with his stern and inexorable conscience, his yearning for beauty indeed ; but for “the beauty of holiness” ; it is he who sighs out of the depths of his conscious guilt to the God of purity for deliverance and salvation ; and of these Hebrews it is the noblest, greatest of them all, the man of widest culture, maturest thought, strongest will, and purest life who cries, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?” Add life and you add care. Increase the circles of interest and you increase the circles of responsibility, and quicken the sense of need of a Divine interpretation of the puzzle-filled pages of the

Book of Human Life. The contradictions and complexities of existence force men to ask, what does this life mean in its totality for us, for our race, for the men that have lived and gone before us, for those who are coming into it, and will have to fight its gigantic evils and carry forward its great movements? Is a philosophy of it possible, and verifiable by the strictest tests, and apprehensible by the common honest mind? Can anything give order to this chaos, unity to these sundered and conflicting forces, beauty and nobility to these petty and inexorable details? Is there a message that will explain its total result and spiritual issue; a portable conception promptly vindicated by the human consciousness of its happiness and sorrows, its successes and defeats; a conception that will become a key to all life's problems, a plan and law of all its monotonous and wearying incidents; a conception embracing the life of the home and of the street, of labour and worship, of science and the State, of recreation and religion, and binding them all in simple unity, sweet harmony, and Divine effectiveness?

IV. As students for the ministry your first work is to recognise distinctly that you are commissioned and trained to give this interpretation and idealisation of life; to offer this effective spiritual leadership to your contemporaries. They need and expect it from you; and your conscience should be so quickened by fellowship with Christ and men that you will regard your preaching as a waste and an illusion, unless you do this work vividly, thoroughly, and inspiringly. As representatives of the Lord Jesus it is yours to further and finish His work. He is the Light of Life. He came from the heavens to our earth, and went to the heavens again, by the way of the lowly manger, the carpenter's shop, the public dedication to the spiritual service of His Nation, the Wilderness of Temptation, the School of Discipleship, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Cross and the Grave, that He might flash the clear and strong light of His life on our dark way, and make a luminous and safe road for us through its tangled forests and over its jagged rocks; and He calls and appoints us to follow Him in His blessed, if exacting, service; to watch for the souls He has saved, to show where they misread His directions; mistake His purposes, and why they fail to find life's true goal.

Into this twofold work of exposition and leadership all your

elaborate training, human as well as Divine, is to go. You study theology ; you must know how men have interpreted the universe by the idea of God ; in what ways they have conceived and expressed the contents of the Christian revelation ; but it is that you may be guided—first, in forming your own theology, and then in using Divine ideas for the help of men sorely perplexed with the problem of God and Duty. The work of the study is spiritual and ethical, or it is in vain. Drill in mathematics, acquisition of the literature of departed peoples, investigation of the controversies of the Church, tracing the course of human thought, as well as your mastery of the meaning of the Scriptures—all is intended to make you able ministers—*i.e.*, able servants, through the New Testament, of the spiritual and ethical life of men. Give your time to the rehabilitating of exploded dogmas or to the display of your historical lumber, and men will leave you, as they ought, in search of some real aid in living a manly life. They do not care for extinct controversies, curious word fights and theological partizanships ; they judge us chiefly by the pertinence and force of the answers we give to the ever-recurring questions of the spirit, “What am I ? Why am I here ? Being here, what ought I to do ? Who or what should rule me ? What are the laws of the best life ? What does the ideal manhood embrace of personal culture, of civic duty ? Is there any effective help against sin ? How shall a man be just with God ? Can we attain to purity in thought and motive ? Seeing selfishness is misery, how can we rid ourselves of it ? If a man die, shall he live again ?” Treat these questions with the courage, fulness, light, and inspiration of the Christianity of Christ Jesus, and men will not fail to find the bread by which they truly live, and live for evermore.

V. Being fully persuaded that this is the chief work of life, then place first of several requisites for its performance—a clear *view and firm grip of the Christian conception of life* ; carefully noting (1) That Human Life, in the Christian idea of it, is not merely human ; it is *Divine*. God is in it ; above it, and yet in it ; over it, and yet through it ; around it as a luminous atmosphere, and yet at every part of it ; separate from its sin, but battling with that sin, mastering it, and casting it out ; graciously “fastened” to all trustful souls, and working out His holy purposes, through them, of devotion and service. Our life is, therefore, itself a part of the Divine life ; created

by God, and ruled by Him ; ruled not from a distance, as though He were "an absentee God," sitting in majestic iciness apart from His universe ; but ruled as by a Father who lives with His family, makes by His presence the life of the family, and constitutes the world a love-filled Home by His Fatherhood ; He never despairing of its full and final happiness, and for evermore uplifting and enlarging its powers and functions by His patience, long-suffering, righteousness, and love. Humanity is thus like ancient Israel, a theocracy ; a theocracy in which the Ruler is Father and Saviour, Renewer and Companion ; showing that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him, for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust."

You begin, then, the interpretation of the Book of Human Life with God. This is the one and only key. Until we have it we blunder and despair. In Him is the answer to the irrepressible questions of men, the satisfaction of their limitless desires, the solace for their sufferings, and the solution of their problems. God is the sufficiency of souls and of society, of life in its individual and social complications and mysteries ; and we must rouse the conscience by the revelation of His inexorable law, fire the imagination by the sight of His surpassing beauty, stir the will with His available energies, warm the heart with His compassionate love, stay the spirit with His infinite patience, and perfect the whole man with His exhaustless joy. "In His light we see light."

2. But if our interpretation is to be fruitful and nourishing as well as true, we must know Him as He appears *in Christ*, reconciling the world of human life to Himself, making it at one with His purpose, participant in His Spirit and surrendered to His will. The Incarnation reveals the reality of life, shows us what it is ; not in its shifting and conflicting phenomena, but in its essential spirit and substance, a divine-human unity. "We are His offspring," "In Him we live and move, and have our being." He lives and works in us, to reach that ideal or image of us, according to which we were made and for whose realisation we have been redeemed. The Life is the Light of men, and the Death is the complete reconciliation of the life of men. The life demonstrates the presence of the Father, and it suffices us ; and the victory of that life in a self-sacrificing death makes an end of sin and brings in an everlasting righteousness. Christ is the Mediator between God and man, the Divine and the human. He is the

God-sent Orpheus whose music produces harmony amongst our disturbing thoughts, as well as the God-given Sacrifice cleansing our sin-stained conscience. He brings peace to the intelligence as well as warmth to the heart; reconciles our divided and contradictory thinkings as well as soothes our aching spirit; extinguishes the dualism in life by exorcising sin, and enthrones unity in and over all by bringing in righteousness. God in Christ is at once the illumination, the redemption, and the harmony of human life.

3. Life being divine and redemptive, it is for us men necessarily disciplinary, educational, and thereby progressive.

"This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank, it means intensely and means good,
To find its meaning is our meat and drink."

But we must go through many a gate of tribulation before we dwell in these wide kingdoms of knowledge and joy.

"You are to understand that we who make
Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end;
There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
Which 'scaped with life, though hurt, we slacken pace
And gather by the wayside herbs and roots
To staunch our wounds; secure from further harm,
We are assailed *to life's extremest verge.*"

From first to last life *is* temptation. We cannot escape. Resisting the subtleties of the world, the flesh, and the devil we are made strong; God's angels dwell with us, and we go to suffering and service, fortified by the strength we have won in fierce contests, and prepared for obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross. Ah, but if we fail! Then, beneficently for us, our sin finds us out. We suffer; we are filled with the fruit of our doings—filled and more than filled, satiated, nauseated with the results of our folly, and we hate ourselves and it, until in our bitterness and misery we get back to Him who meets us in mercy and righteousness. We are made for holiness, and our training, could we only see it, is conducting us to that divinest goal, conformity to His will and character. Even the *ennui* that punishes our idleness is healing; the unrest and self-censure following and whipping our vanity and pride are cleansing; and the insatiable hunger for power and fame and influence keep our human life moving in the lines of healthful if painful work; restful if unsatisfying recreation; and salutary if slow progress.

4. With such a central conception of the meaning and total issue of our experience we must interpret the mystic Book of Life. That Christian idea is the supreme concern of all. Life must be seen in God to be seen aright, as continuously *divine* and not merely human. This is the clue that will take us through the tangled labyrinths of the past, and the complicated details of the present. This is the divine mould into which we must run our thinkings; the law and plan to which we may instantly refer our decisions and deeds. Proclaiming it, preachers and teachers have created new epochs of spiritual emotion and progress. At its founts they have found their inspirations, and from the materials it has supplied they have elected their instruments. Using it, *Stephen*, the deacon, anticipated Saul of Tarsus in the discovery of the connection and meaning of Hebrew history, in fixing the place of Christ as the expositor of the past, the realisation of its redemptive purpose, the fulfilment of all its desire and hope, and the living centre around which history, properly and philosophically regarded, groups all its facts and persons. Illumined by its radiance, *Jonathan Edwards* initiated a new era in 1731 in New England theology, and in the life of the churches of the United States. Preaching his sermon on "God glorified in man's dependence," he created a spiritual revolution, which is still in force there and here.*

A similar reaction was started in Germany at the beginning of this century, when *Schleiermacher* published his epoch-making sermons on the "instinct of dependence on God as the essential element in the human consciousness," and started the return of the Germans from their "century" of cold speculation to one of positive and intelligent faith. Indeed, the story of the human race is a vital organic whole, throbbingly alive with God in Christ; and the appearance of these preachers fired and fused by this conception of the redeeming God in all our life, are the points of special illumination. Augustine and Luther, Whitefield and Vinet, Robertson and Beecher, are led back to this starting point, led back by the Word, and then led forward to the most fruitful issues. For nothing can aid us as the Bible can, to think the thoughts of God about human life, to see it as He sees it, and to move through its tragic griefs with His patience and tranquillity, as knowing its final issue.

* "Life and Writings of Jonathan Edwards." By A. V. G. Allen, D.D., p. 57-8.

Beginning with the Scriptures, and getting its living principles to work in life, we shall not fear criticism or yield to despair. The greatest enemy of the Bible—as of life—is not criticism, but ignorance. Men err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the meaning of life, and we must bring them back to the living God so that they may see that as “History is the truth that God has made,” so life is the truth He is now making; that, as the successive facts given in the two Testaments are the unfolding of the life and of the redemptive purpose of the Father, so the sequence of events in the present life of man is of His ordering; that God Himself is immanent in all; and the beating heart of all; that epochs, nations, institutions, societies, literature, men, are the product and expression of His ideas and energies; and the Saviour, Son of Man and Son of God, is the key to, and the only true interpretation of, Providence; and as men see God’s angels ascending and descending the ladder of life, and Himself directing all, they will be constrained to say, “Lo, God is in this place, and we knew it not. This life itself is none other than the House of God, and the gate of Heaven.”

VI. But the functions of expositors and spiritual leaders in life cannot be discharged without a *broad, intelligent, and sympathetic humanism*. It is admitted that ours is a time of intense, increasing spiritual and social trouble; and that the task of the Christian preacher was never more exacting and more exhaustive than now. Most precious and costly is the service asked of us, costly to nerve and muscle, costly to will and character; and therefore only souls, great and strong in God, will pay the full price. A narrow, hard man can interpret nothing, not even himself. A mere vivisector of texts helps nobody in the seething life of to-day. The frigid logician has his place, but it is not in the pulpit. The ecclesiastic susceptible of fine enthusiasms for precise forms and antique ceremonies is an estimable individual, but he leads no crusades, unless it be against the fresh and eager life of the day. Christ’s apostles must, at least, have hearts. They can dispense with prestige, “millinery,” fashion, priestly ordination, and state sanction, but they must have hearts. They must live in their own age, be sufficiently sympathetic with its life to understand it, to estimate its good and bad elements, its forces made for depravity and death and those made for holiness and growth; its feverish activity and destructive hurry, its growing altruism and increasing capacity for the pleasures

of art; its strange but increasing return to nomadism, and its aggregation in large civic centres; its deepening spiritual sorrows, and its engrossing and overshadowing social interests.

1. Before all things, the preacher must cultivate strong and growing sympathies with the spiritual sorrow and strife of men, with souls struggling towards the light, but baffled by the entanglements of doubt and flung back by spasms of scepticism; from whom God seems to have hidden His face, or to have been dissipated into the invisible ether by the chemistry of philosophy, or blacked out of human life by the mandate of cruel facts. He should represent faithfully to himself the misery of those to whom sin, personal and inward, is the most terrible reality, so terrible as to paralyse will and create despair; and yet he should be able to rejoice with those who in sweetly serene trust move forward through cloud and light, glad and happy as if the sunshine of the Father always fell on their meekly uplifted eyes. He must be able to trace the subtle phases of the suffering mind

“Tinged with infinite desire
For all that might have been,”

the unfulfilled longings, the thwarted wishes,

“Fallings from us, vanishings,
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realised.”

Of all men we are the least at liberty to remain ignorant of the pain and perplexity of those who feel the bitterness of their spiritual imprisonment, and beat their wings against the bars impatient to be free. We cannot be indifferent to such as wither and die in the morning of their life, bemoaning that nothing is finished, though much has been attempted, more desired, and still more prayed for in vain; or cold towards those defeated souls who bear the crushing weight of their spoilt lives, burning and blistered with a maddening self-contempt that drives them to despair at once of God and man. If we say, “Behold I knew it not,” doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it? Did He not appoint us His watchmen? Are we not the successors of His Son, and is it not our privilege to place ourselves where He always did, by the side of the weakest and most suffering; with those who are saying to the Saviour Himself, “Art thou He that should come, or must

we look for another ? ” Must we not seek out those who have lost most and hasten to befriend men who dare not attempt the paths of sobriety and godliness unsupported, and appeal for some strong human arm to lean upon till they feel sure of God ? Ah ! friends, these are the tasks that expose the depths of our spiritual poverty, and compel us to seek the special gifts and training of the Friend of Sinners, the Comforter of those who mourn, the Saviour of all the lost.

2. But in the intensity of our spiritual sympathies we must not forget the principal intellectual revolution of our century. Indeed, we cannot ! for it has created some of our gravest difficulties and accentuated and increased the bitterness of many of our spiritual troubles ; dazing and bewildering reflective minds with the notion that logic must stand aside to make room for life, and physical science be condemned to secure a free field for religion. Not a few reverent souls have been offended, and some have suffered greatly sometimes at the hands of those who have not met science with the sympathy necessary to understand what it said, and sometimes from those who mistook a formula for a religion and the perishable creed for the living Gospel. You will not fall into such mistakes. The danger from a fancied conflict between Science and Christianity is almost, if not quite, gone by ; and a new and larger humanism, the gift of God through the students of Nature, is being slowly incorporated with our life. With the introduction of Christianity, with the Renaissance, and with the newly-born study of Nature—three of the greatest mind-stirring events of all the ages—there was first a widespread disturbance of old ways of thinking and speaking, then a readjustment of ideas, then an addition to our working knowledge, and at last a real and definite human advance. So the conception of science which regards Nature itself as an organism rather than a machine, a living unity and order ruled by an Infinite Intelligence more than a huge box of tools, is waiting to become one of our working thoughts, thereby aiding in the illustration and enforcement of the great Christian idea of our life and home as Divinely human and humanly Divine. Grateful for these gifts of the Eternal, you will treat science and art as the handmaids of Christianity and the true helpers of men, and offer the ministry of spiritual guidance and impulse to those whose lot it is to move within these God-created realms.

3. But though we are relieved in the direction of science, and have discovered a friend where our fathers expected a foe,

the strain on our sympathy, wisdom, and faith is enormously increased by the universal ascendancy of social interests, social responsibilities, and social problems. For centuries the individual life has not been so completely penetrated and overshadowed, not to say overwhelmed, by the social life as it is now. National and international, town and civic, educational and labour questions compel the attention of reflective minds and philanthropic hearts. The squalor of the poor ; the peril of childhood ; the absurd and irrational tyranny of men over women, permitting them to excel them in scholastic competitions, but keeping a firm hold of the substantial emoluments ; the crushing of the lives of the toilers under the wheels of the Jaganath car of competition ; the fostering of vice by State regulations ; the growth of the gambling mania : all these call for spiritual leaders of wide sympathy, keen insight, special devotion, and heroic spirit.

A new social world is at the doors, and it is not for us to reckon with it as though it were not of God, but to go forward and claim it for His Son ; pioneering His way into it so that He may come and fulfil His promise of universal brotherhood, of the hallowing of all labour, the emancipation of women, the protection of children, the exorcism of crippling and debasing greed, and the enthronement of righteousness. These social phenomena have to be interpreted in their *spiritual* and eternal relations, as they affect the redemption and perfectest use and development of all men, the expulsion of all conditions inimical to human well-being, and the building of the highest type of man. Only large, noble-souled men, living a strong and deep life in God, accepting work for others as of God, and seeking to transfigure all life by a Divine sympathy, will suffice for this high calling. Certain metals are only fusible at a very high temperature, and the human spirit, if it is to be fused, requires heat, and the more difficult and intractable that spirit the greater the demand for the intensest heat of souls burning with the fires of a Divine love. We must be able to say "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that one died for all, therefore all died, and He died for all that they who live should not live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again."

VII. Need I add, it is at the risk of losing all efficiency, you fail to cultivate and maintain an undespairing temper, an un-

dimmed hopefulness, as to life and its issues. A man may give a right interpretation to the Book of Life in such a tone as to convey a false impression. Truth may be spoken with such painful depression of spirit or failure of vitality as to beget scepticism instead of faith, and generate anxiety instead of diffusing calm. God is the God of Hope, and the Gospel is God's fullest expression of Himself and therefore of His hope. Theism is the true optimism, and Christianity is vindicated and illuminated optimism. Open-eyed and alert it sees everything, embraces all facts, specially the worst, the pain and discord, the poverty and penalty, the temptation and struggle, and yet courageously says "God is love"; man may be redeemed, evil defeated, holiness won, death conquered and eternal life gained. Therefore the preacher of that Gospel must add to faith love, and to love *hope*—the hope that maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart and in human life by the Holy Ghost. No pessimist is fit for the ministry of Christianity. A bad theology is unspeakably mischievous, but pessimism is a plague, and the victim of it should go into quarantine forthwith. You must be men of a mighty hope. Read, think, and pray that you may feed the forces of hope. Do not judge superficially. See far, and see deeply. Remember, all strong periods in our history, such as the Elizabethan and this Victorian, suffered acutely from religious doubt; but doubt led the way to a purer, stronger faith, and a larger ministry. "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in His Son." History read and interpreted aright bids us "be of hope," and endorses the advice of the acute and philosophic Emerson: "Don't be a cynic and disconsolate preacher. Don't bewail and bemoan. Omit the negative propositions. Nerve us with incessant affirmatives. Don't waste yourself in rejection, nor bark against the bad, but chant the beauty of the good. When that is spoken which has a right to be spoken, the chatter and criticism will stop. Set down nothing that will not help somebody:

"For every gift of noble origin
Is breathed upon by Hope's eternal breath."

I do not advise unreality; by no means. "Reality is an inexorable condition of preaching." But I do say, be careful of your tone. Nothing is so infectious. Watch it. Listen to it. Let it be manly, strong, resonant with confidence and vic-

tory. Don't whine. Cultivate a buoyant and exhilarating utterance, and, in defiance of all depression and languor, say :—

“ It fortifies my soul to know
That though I perish truth is so.
That howso'er I stray and range,
Where'er I go, Thou dost not change.
I readier step when I recall
That if I slip, Thou dost not fall.”

VIII.—But since you are to be spiritual leaders as well as interpreters, your exposition of life must be set out constructively as well as sympathetically, and with the authority and force of reasoned and experienced truth not less than with the ardour of an unquenchable hope. Men ask for guidance. They seek the feet of those who have understanding of the times, and know what England ought to do in her churches, her cities, and the State. They ask for light on the cultivation of the devout life, the most healthful and serviceable modes of Christian fellowship and co-operation, the economic and political principles that must control the reshaping of the life of the coming century.

In this you *must* lead. It is not possible to keep behind. I do not say you must actively and obtrusively lead, taking the place of politicians, town councillors, and the like, but lead in the nobler way of forming and disseminating ruling ideas, inspiring policies of brotherhood, kindness, purity and justice, creating lofty sentiment, firing civic and political enthusiasm, and uplifting Divine and Christ-like ideals.

For such a task you will need (1) as wide and accurate knowledge as you can acquire of the copious literature of these themes. You must know what has been done, and with what failure or success ; what is and was thought by the best minds. The history of Churches and of the Church, the rise and growth of towns, the treatment of the criminal, pauper, afflicted, and labouring classes of the population, the whole domain of economic science, invite your attention.* But (2) your chief aim must be to secure a personal knowledge of the people—gained by sympathetic contact—of their condition, needs, capabilities, cravings, and hopes ; and then (3) faithfully and lovingly to utter the truth you find.

“ Experience teaches,” says the proverb. It / does ;

* On this last subject, see an admirable guide in a series of papers in *The Answer Review*, vols. XI., XII., XIII.

dimmed hopefulness, as to life and its issues. A man may give a right interpretation to the Book of Life in such a tone as to convey a false impression. Truth may be spoken with such painful depression of spirit or failure of vitality as to beget scepticism instead of faith, and generate anxiety instead of diffusing calm. God is the God of Hope, and the Gospel is God's fullest expression of Himself and therefore of His hope. Theism is the true optimism, and Christianity is vindicated and illuminated optimism. Open-eyed and alert it sees everything, embraces all facts, specially the worst, the pain and discord, the poverty and penalty, the temptation and struggle, and yet courageously says "God is love"; man may be redeemed, evil defeated, holiness won, death conquered and eternal life gained. Therefore the preacher of that Gospel must add to faith love, and to love *hope*—the hope that maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart and in human life by the Holy Ghost. No pessimist is fit for the ministry of Christianity. A bad theology is unspeakably mischievous, but pessimism is a plague, and the victim of it should go into quarantine forthwith. You must be men of a mighty hope. Read, think, and pray that you may feed the forces of hope. Do not judge superficially. See far, and see deeply. Remember, all strong periods in our history, such as the Elizabethan and this Victorian, suffered acutely from religious doubt; but doubt led the way to a purer, stronger faith, and a larger ministry. "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in His Son." History read and interpreted aright bids us "be of hope," and endorses the advice of the acute and philosophic Emerson: "Don't be a cynic and disconsolate preacher. Don't bewail and bemoan. Omit the negative propositions. Nerve us with incessant affirmatives. Don't waste yourself in rejection, nor bark against the bad, but chant the beauty of the good. When that is spoken which has a right to be spoken, the chatter and criticism will stop. Set down nothing that will not help somebody:

"For every gift of noble origin
Is breathed upon by Hope's eternal breath."

I do not advise unreality; by no means. "Reality is an inexorable condition of preaching." But I do say, be careful of your tone. Nothing is so infectious. Watch it. Listen to it. Let it be manly, strong, resonant with confidence and vic-

tory. Don't whine. Cultivate a buoyant and exhilarating utterance, and, in defiance of all depression and languor, say :—

“ It fortifies my soul to know
That though I perish truth is so.
That howso'er I stray and range,
Where'er I go, Thou dost not change.
I readier step when I recall
That if I slip, Thou dost not fall.”

VIII.—But since you are to be spiritual leaders as well as interpreters, your exposition of life must be set out constructively as well as sympathetically, and with the authority and force of reasoned and experienced truth not less than with the ardour of an unquenchable hope. Men ask for guidance. They seek the feet of those who have understanding of the times, and know what England ought to do in her churches, her cities, and the State. They ask for light on the cultivation of the devout life, the most healthful and serviceable modes of Christian fellowship and co-operation, the economic and political principles that must control the reshaping of the life of the coming century.

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“ Experience teaches,” says the proverb. It *does* ;

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it teaches and qualifies the teacher more than anything else, if he will only be faithful to it. I do not forget that when I was what is called "a local preacher" I was told that all good preaching was experimental—a description that ought to have been enough to lock the lips of a lad of sixteen; and yet I remember that even such a youth may have more truth wrought into his experience than he has courage to declare; for there are few of us who surrender ourselves absolutely to those truths God created us to speak, and by which God has mastered and possessed us. Long training, severe simplicity of spirit, and a full reliance on God's work in us, are necessary for most of us before we venture to place in the foreground of our ministry those working truths by which we were lifted to God, and drank of His joys and grew in His likeness. It is St. Augustine who says, "I preach that on which I live, and where my soul finds pasture in that I minister." "The characteristic of the great preachers has been the comparatively small range of their working truths. Some ruling conception of God, carrying with it the appropriate view of human life in its action and destiny, has been their constant theme. And their surrender to this conception, whatever it may have been, has given them their power. Their preaching has had about it one unmistakable mark—the iterative quality. They never repeat *themselves*—their theme yields infinite variety—but they are always repeating their *truth*. It appears and reappears in all their utterances. They blaze their way through their generation by the truth which masters them, 'the master light of all their seeing.' We can retrace their steps, not by the marks of style, but by ruling ideas and motives."*

The inestimable power and value of the experience of life to the preacher shows how specially salutary is the work done by College men outside their own walls of a directly evangelising character; and demonstrates that the College must annex "missions to the East-end" populations, so-called, for the sake of the future ministry as well as for the real gain of the people. You have not only to learn the *theory* of preaching from professorial lectures, acquire *material* for preaching by reading and reflection, but to MASTER THE ART OF PREACHING AND OF "SAVING MEN" out and out and altogether—for this life first, though also for the next;—saving

* *Andover Review*, Vol. XIII., 545.

them socially as well as individually — the noblest and divinest of all work given to mortals—and that can only be well acquired by *doing the work itself under the actual conditions*, as near as may be, which confront a man when he accepts a pastorate. Reading a sermon in class, a painful, if necessary, process, differs as much from preaching to living men as preparing a sketch of the water-works of a town differs from building and perfecting the whole of the arrangements by which that town is supplied with water. The builder's apprentice must not only know the theories of architecture, and be capable of sketching plans, but he must himself actually *build* under the direction of his master. The "workman" who is to have little reason to be ashamed in his first year's work as a pastor should surely have acquired considerable facility in handling his tools during his collegiate course.

Such apprenticeship to *doing*, and learning by doing the very work for which you come to College, will prevent your lapsing into a negative and Christless theology, or regarding the eternally living Christ Himself simply as a necessary element in a theological system. I never forget the conflicts I had during my College life, as I read the works of Theodore Parker, Orville Dewey, and others of the same school; but I am most grateful for the help that came to me through strenuous endeavours to "save" men, made Sunday after Sunday, not only in preaching, but in face-to-face conversation with young men after preaching, and in a Bible-class which I conducted in the week. The chaotic and disturbing realm of dogma receded, as the realities of struggle with sin and sorrow, defeat in the fight of faith, and aspiration for purity, bore themselves in upon my heart; and the mere effort to give appropriate aid, made palpably manifest the indispensable medicinal energies of the Redeeming Christ. A man may shut himself in his study, or argue with his fellow students till he debates his soul into the blinding wilderness of chronic doubt. Give him the work of "saving a life," guiding a perplexed spirit, helping a young drunkard to sobriety, sustaining a mechanic in his struggles with the vice and scepticism around him, and every stroke of work he does will reinforce his faith in Christ and His conquering Gospel. I speak that which I know, and testify what I have seen.

All experience says it is necessary that men who preach the Gospel should never lose the suasive force of that genuine fervour which comes from actual contact with their fellows.

A glowing spiritual life is the undecaying source of the minister's power. I have heard of men going to college fired with contagious enthusiasms and passionate zeal, and coming out after a four years' training,

" Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
Dead perfection, no more."

Books may petrify. Humanity softens. Contact with "dead languages" may freeze the soul. Fellowship with the spirits of men yearning to be just kindles affection and inflames desire. You must not "lose touch" of humanity. If you do, though your rhetoric be perfect and your logic invincible, you will not have "letters of commendation written in the *heart* known and read of all men; written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the *living* God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are *hearts of flesh*."

Moreover, if a man lives only in books and deals exclusively with them, he is in danger of becoming a mere memoriser, and not a vigorous, free, independent, and courageous *thinker*; sermons will be "bookish" rather than human; echoes of "essays" and "reviews," instead of messages from God, warm with the throbbing life of a brother man; "skeletons" or "schemes" fit for a critic's eye, but lacking that perennial freshness which comes from free and forcible thinking upon the spiritual facts of every-day life.

With what completeness all this applies to the hydra-headed social peril threatening us goes without saying. The coming preachers must know economic science if they are to speak without mistake and with authority; and they must get their grip of facts at firsthand, by study "on the spot," where the problems are—in the slums and the factory, in the village and the City, amongst "strikes" and labour combinations and "masters' unions." Vague denunciation of men, who want to do right and do not see how, will only exasperate and alienate the men from Christ. Advices given with unruffled complacency, but not subjected to the searching tests of experience, will fill the mind of those who know the facts with irritation and distrust. The leader must know. The doctrines of Christian Sociology must be adorned with adequacy of information and clearness of statement, not less than with a fine justice and a beautiful charity. So equipped, you must take your place as spiritual leaders. The Bishops of the Free Churches must not be behind, but before, the age. We lead in the Service of Man

because we are called to lead in the Service of God. Great will be our discredit if we are behind our age and not before it, the last instead of the first to use the reforming and regenerating forces of the Gospel for society. Christ Jesus our Shepherd was a Doer rather than a Talker, and He is the Pattern of our social and saving ministry.

IX.—For such tasks as these it is necessary, above all things, that we *should live a strong inward spiritual life*—a life of faith in God, of high aims, sustained unselfishness, and purest devotion. It is what we are that is our power. To interpret the life of man, we must ourselves really and intensely live—live, not drone away existence. We interpret by what we are, by the moral, spiritual, and intellectual forces of our *personality*. We draw others to us as we are “*lifted up*” in self-sacrificing service. The law for Christ is the law for us. His *life*—that is the light of men; life—not the word merely or only, revealing and inspiring as it is; but Himself, His being, His glorious personality in its Divine fulness. We must draw from that “fulness and grace for grace.” Personal life is power. “In some way the preacher has to make himself felt; that is his first and last business. The truth we can get elsewhere; what we want of him is inspiration, conviction, incentive, persuasion.”* Not his eloquence, not his knowledge, not his gifts, but the truth that is felt by himself, that is real to him, makes him what he is, and comes with all the moral energy of his personal life, that it is which impresses, holds, and sways men. The personality of the preacher is his originality, his only originality, and that originality is his strength. God rewrites His Bible in souls morning by morning. “The Lord” gives to His servant “the tongue of them that are taught that he should know how to sustain with words him that is weary; he wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught.” Hence we must get men to feel not only that the Holy Ghost did speak in times past, but is speaking now to the heart and conscience through the Bible, as He speaks through no other book, and through good men who, “like Barnabas, are full of the Holy Ghost and faith;” we must show that the Old Testament did not only solve the problems of Isaiah concerning Israel and Assyria; but offers the best answers to the questions pressing upon us in England, and India, and Africa

now. Cultivate reverence for God and for man. Live ever within the sound of the Divine voice. Be magnanimous, courteous, gracious, true and unselfish. Hate meanness; it dwarfs. Be absolutely sincere; it uplifts. Let self be lost in Christ, and the will be yoked to an unswerving obedience to His law. Be warned by the fate of the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the Lord, and

“ Trust not the dangerous path again—
O forward step and lingering will !
O lov'd and warn'd in vain ;
And wilt thou perish still ?

Alas, my brother ! round thy tomb
In sorrow kneeling, and in fear,
We read the pastor's doom,
Who speaks and will not hear.

The grey-hair'd saint may fall at last,
The surest guide a wanderer prove ;
Death only binds us fast
To the bright shore of love.”*

X. But my parting word must be of blended hope and toil. A writer on the ministry, Mr. T. A. Hyde, says, “ Never, perhaps, in the history of Shepherdism has there been so good an opportunity to do the Lord's work as that which presents itself to the preachers of our age,” and, I will add, never had the pastorates of our Free Churches more to offer to stalwart and courageous souls, panting to do the utmost a redeemed man may for his generation. You stand at the dawning of the preacher's golden year. Be attracted, but patient. Be allured and fascinated by the prospects of service, but do not “ scamp ” your training and refuse long and severe discipline. It takes time to do good work. It takes time to grow the convictions by which we can live and labour, and from whose power we can speak with light and authority. Preaching is the hardest work mortal man ever undertakes. It makes larger demands on his whole nature, body, soul, and spirit ; on his time, patience, faith, energy, endurance, hopefulness, and self-denial than any other vocation under heaven. Lawyers mostly have to wait long for their prizes, but they may obtain large gains with a defective discipline and a sorry character. The guild of literature is exclusive, but over its doors is not written, “ Only the pure in heart can enter here.”

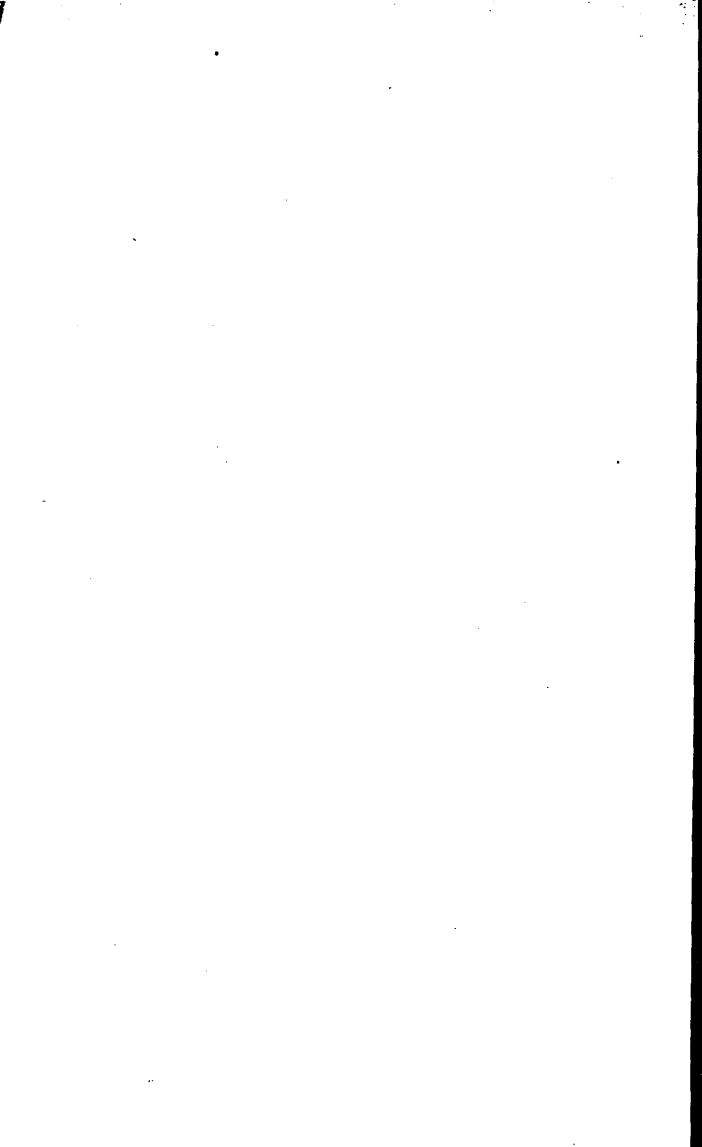
* Keble's “ Christian Year,” Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

The lottery of statesmanship has many blanks ; but a man may rise to the presidency of Her Majesty's Cabinet without attaining surpassing virtues. Physicians need much teaching and long experience, but they may win fame and fees with inconceivably less preparation and labour than a minister of the Gospel can secure pure, abiding, and divine success. A few men with less than forty-eight ounces of brain, with only a fragmentary training, most imperfectly endowed, mentally and morally, and scarcely capable of more than lustily ringing the changes on a very limited stock of ideas, may leap into conspicuous positions, acquire sudden *éclat*, and ample stipends ; but those first and real rewards, the salvation of men from sin, and their upbuilding after the pattern of Christ, do not usually attend the labours of half-disciplined, half-devoted hireling preachers of the Gospel. "Every man receives his reward according to his labour." Let him build with wood easily cut down, and, alas ! easily burnt, too ! with swiftly mown grass, cheap and almost useless stubble, and other unfit material, and the day of fire will consume it all to ashes ; and though he has built upon the right foundation, his work will be gone, and it will be due entirely to God's infinite mercy that the lazy, ignorant, and impure builder himself is not gone too. The man who desires to find his life work when he finds himself saved must take care not only to preach Christ, but to preach Him with thoroughly disciplined and perfected powers ; building with the most costly and endurable materials he is able to get, "gold and silver, and precious stones."

Jesus Christ, the Model Preacher, waited till He began to be about thirty years of age before He went into the cities and villages preaching the Word. *He was always under training.* Bushnell says, "He had no study. He was no deep meditationist—no recluse working out his problems and living in his frames, but a wonderfully outdoor character." Still, in the quiet of His Nazareth home, amongst the lovely scenes of Galilee, with the people of the market-place at Cana of Galilee and Capernaum, along with the fishermen on the shores of the Lake of Tiberias seeking to help and bless men, He was training Himself to find the ways of approach to the human heart, and preparing for the hour when, as a preacher, He would speak with the authority of profound conviction and power, and not with the indifference and ineffectiveness of the Scribes. Eight years come between the conversion of the learned and well-trained scholar on the Damascus road and

the arrival of the evangelist at Antioch under the wise and kindly lead of Barnabas. In the solitude and silence of Arabia, at his home in Tarsus, amongst the scenes of his childhood, the great Apostle lingered to readjust his thoughts, master the new ideas he had received from Christ Jesus, and qualify for his task of regenerating the intellect and heart of Europe. Augustine, a man of immense reading, and especially qualified as a rhetorician, keenly realises, on his conversion, his deficiencies, and seeks in direct self discipline to fit himself for his work as a preacher and servant of the Word. Luther was made a polished shaft in the hands of the Lord by the education at Erfurth and the imprisonment in the Wartburg. The God of Wisdom has ever delighted to use and honour the most wholly-consecrated and perfectly-trained powers of His children for the accomplishment of the purposes of His grace. Those who give Him their best receive from Him the most. We cannot do abiding work without prayer and pains, searching the deep things of God, the mystery of our own nature and the discipline of our Father. We must often go into the valley of silence to gather strength and momentum for service and progress.

Our work is great. Sublimier vocation there is not. Let us seek the most thorough, wise, continuous, and complete equipment for it. Every power at its best—power of body, soul, and spirit—should be our motto. It is cowardly to shirk discipline. It is weak to be in a hurry. It is wicked to be without faith and hope. God is our tutor: let us yield to His discipline. The strong Jehovah is patient. Let us be strong in Him. He works in us and upon us and through us: let us not bate a jot of hope, but ever be in training for better service in His kingdom. “Unresting, unhasting”—that is our attitude. Eager but calm; strenuous and enthusiastic, yet patient and self-controlled; trustful in God and “given to reading”; guided and filled by the Spirit and nourished by His Word, let us give ourselves to the Service of Man in the interpretation and Spiritual Leadership of Human Life.



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